



Medicare's Coverage of the H1N1 Flu Vaccine

2009 H1N1 flu (sometimes referred to as “swine flu”) is caused by a new strain of influenza virus. It is causing illness in people. The virus spreads from person-to-person, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal flu viruses spread.

The symptoms of 2009 H1N1 flu are similar to the symptoms of regular seasonal flu. These symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills, and fatigue. A significant number of people who have been infected with the 2009 H1N1 flu virus also have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

If you have flu-like symptoms, call your doctor's office right away.

Is there a vaccine for 2009 H1N1 flu, like there is for the seasonal flu?

Yes. The initial doses of 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine are currently available for those at highest risk for infection. Additional doses are scheduled for shipment each week.

Who should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?

There are some groups of people who have a higher risk of getting the 2009 H1N1 flu than others. Therefore, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended that the following groups get their vaccine as soon as it becomes available in their area:

- Pregnant women
- People who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age
- Healthcare and emergency medical services personnel
- Persons between the ages of 6 months through 24 years
- People ages 25 through 64 years who are at higher risk because of chronic health disorders or weakened immune systems



Who should get the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine? (continued)

Healthy 25 through 64 year olds and adults 65 years and older should also be vaccinated as more vaccine becomes available. Unlike the regular flu, people age 65 and older have a lower risk than younger age groups for getting the 2009 H1N1 flu. However, you should talk to your doctor to learn if you are in a risk category. If you have Medicare because you are disabled or have End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD), you may be in one of these higher risk groups. **Talk with your doctor about if and when to get the vaccine.**

Note: If you are sick and need to be in close contact with someone who has a higher risk of getting the 2009 H1N1 flu, consider wearing a surgical mask or cover your nose and mouth with a tissue. Remember to wash your hands frequently.

Will Medicare cover the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine?

Yes. Medicare will cover administration of the 2009 H1N1 flu. Your doctor or health care provider can't charge you for the 2009 H1N1 vaccine because they received the vaccine for free.

You pay nothing for the 2009 H1N1 vaccine's administration if your doctor or health care provider accepts assignment. Assignment means that your doctor, provider, or supplier has signed an agreement with Medicare to accept the Medicare-approved amount as full payment for covered services. The Part B deductible and coinsurance don't apply to the 2009 H1N1 vaccine or its administration.

Do I also need to get the seasonal flu vaccine?

Yes, you should still get the seasonal flu vaccine. Medicare will pay for the seasonal flu vaccine once per flu season. You pay nothing if your doctor or health care provider accepts assignment. The seasonal flu vaccine is different from the 2009 H1N1 flu vaccine. The CDC is encouraging people to get both vaccines.

Are there medicines to treat the 2009 H1N1 flu?

Yes. There are drugs your doctor may prescribe for treating both seasonal and H1N1 flu called "antiviral drugs." These drugs can make you better faster and may also prevent serious complications. This flu season, antiviral drugs are being used mainly to treat people who are very sick, such as people who need to be hospitalized, and to treat sick people who are more likely to get serious flu complications. Contact your doctor for advice on how to treat the H1N1 flu. Remember, most people with 2009 H1N1 flu have had mild illness and haven't needed medical care or antiviral drugs, and the same is true of seasonal flu.

If you have Medicare prescription drug coverage, antiviral drugs may be covered. Check with your plan.



Where can I find more information about the 2009 H1N1 flu, including how the virus is spread and how to prevent it?

For more information about the 2009 H1N1 flu, visit www.flu.gov or the Centers for Disease Control Web site at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/. You can also call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) for more information.

Where can I find out more about Medicare?

For more information about Medicare, visit www.medicare.gov. You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.